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## ABSTRACT

Students of career counseling study a variety of therapeutic approaches. Logotherapy is an approach that addresses issues concerning meaning in work. There have been many studies of worker dissatisfaction which point to a gap between the desire of the worker to have intrinsic meaning in work and the actual work experience. This initial investigation was conducted to get a sense of the awareness of logotherapy among students of career counseling and to discern if this is an issue in need of further investigation. Fifteen graduate students in a career and life planning course completed a questionnaire devised to measure their knowledge, usage, and agreement with the basic tenets of logotherapy and three other major therapies (cognitive-behavioral therapy, client-centered therapy, and psychodynamic therapy). The results of the study indicated that subjects did not understand logotherapy but did understand the other therapies. However, subjects also seemed to agree with the basic tenets of logotherapy more than with the basic tenets of the other therapies. These findings suggest a need for further investigation into the place of logotherapy in the career counseling curriculum. The questionnaire for potential career and/or guidance counselors is appended. (Author/NB)

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# Logotherapy Salience

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## Salience of Logotherapy Among Students of Career Counseling

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Abstract

Students of career counseling study a variety of therapeutic approaches. Logotherapy is an approach that addresses issues concerning meaning in work (Ivey, Ivey & Simek-Downing, 1987). There have been many studies of worker dissatisfaction which point to a gap between the desire of the worker to have intrinsic meaning in work and the actual work experience. This initial investigation was conducted to get a sense of the awareness of logotherapy among students of career counseling, and to discern if this is an issue in need of further investigation. Fifteen students of career counseling completed a questionnaire devised to measure their knowledge, usage, and agreement with the basic tenants of logotherapy and three other major therapies. The results of this study indicate that students do not understand logotherapy but do understand the other therapies addressed, and that they agree with the basic tenants of logotherapy more than the basic tenants of the other therapies. These results suggest a need for further investigation into place of logotherapy in the career counseling curriculum.

Salience of Logotherapy Among  
Students of Career Counseling

A sense of meaninglessness in life is prevalent in our culture (Ruffin, 1984). According to psychotherapist Victor Frankl (1978), the struggle to perceive a higher meaning to existence is the dominant drive in human life. Frankl (cited by Ruffin, 1984) asserts that this drive is often frustrated. He has addressed the philosophical or theological issue of purpose in life and has developed a form of counseling called logotherapy which synthesizes psychodynamic methods, existentialist views and a broad cognitive behavior modification perspective (Anthanasou, 1984). The task of logotherapy is to help the client find meaning and purpose in life (Ivey, 1987). Purpose in life and a person's life's work are often inextricably linked. An individual can meet the challenge of creating a meaningful life by believing in creative values such as devoting oneself to a career (Missinee & Wilcox, 1981). According to Anthanasou (1984), career counselors are unaware of logotherapy.

A review of the literature revealed the dichotomy between what workers believe is important in work and what they are experiencing. Yankelovich (cited by Baxter & Bowers, 1985)

found that four out of five people he surveyed believe that hard work and doing one's best are more important than the extrinsic reward of financial remuneration. According to Baxter and Bowers (1985), people do not feel moral in the absence of meaning. In a study of worker dissatisfaction, 77 percent of blue collar workers and 57 percent of white collar workers would leave their present positions if given a chance to change their kind of work (Neikrug, 1982). People engaged in intrinsically satisfying work are apparently a minority.

Career counselors have the opportunity to help people in the search for meaning in life through work. According to Anthanasou, there has not been any direct application of logotherapy to career guidance issues. Neikrug (1982) urges therapists to become more adept in dealing with the issues of existential meaning and work.

This current initial investigation was undertaken for three reasons: first, to determine if graduate students in Guidance and Counseling at Bowling Green State University are familiar with and understand the basic assumptions and tenets of logotherapy; second, to find out if this same target group agree that logotherapy is a legitimate and valuable counseling tool; and , third, to discover if this group would use logotherapy in the

practice of career counseling. The three fundamental assumptions of logotherapy are: freedom of will, will to meaning and meaning of life (Baxter, 1985). Frankl (1984) submits that an individual's primary motivation in life is his/her search for meaning, and he labels this as will to meaning. Meaning in life refers to the specific meaning of a person's life at any given moment, not a general or abstract conceptualization (Frankl, 1984). "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment " (Frankl, 1984, p. 113). Freedom of will refers to the freedom of individuals to choose what they will do and what they will be even if this requires overcoming biological, psychological and/or sociological conditions (Frankl, 1984).

#### Methods

The sample consisted of 15 graduate students enrolled at a midwestern state supported four-year college institution in a Career and Life Planning Course. There were three males and twelve females. Major areas of study represented were distributed as follows: sixty-seven percent in Guidance and Counseling, seven percent in College Student Personnel, seven percent in Marriage and Family Therapy, and twenty percent with dual majors in College Student Personnel and Guidance and

Counseling. Thirteen percent will graduate in 1991, eighty percent in 1992, and seven percent in 1994. Forty-six percent plan to practice career counseling, forty-six percent do not plan to practice career counseling and seven percent are undecided.

The instrument used in this pilot study was a four part, 24- item questionnaire devised by the author (see Appendix) to measure attitudes. Part one was designed for reporting biographic information. Parts II and III used a Likert scale in which respondents were asked whether they strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), were undecided (U), disagreed (D), or strongly disagreed (SD) to a series of statements. Part II measured theory preference and knowledge of logotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, psychodynamics, and client-centered therapy approaches. Part III measured agreement with the theoretical constructs of the therapies addressed. Part IV asked the respondent to define their understanding of the purpose of career counseling.

Questionnaires were administered to the students by the author in the summer session of 1991. Questionnaires were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Norusis, 1982).

### Results

Responses of those planning to practice career counseling did not vary from those not planning to practice career counseling. Student responses to the section of the questionnaire concerning theory knowledge and usage are presented in Table 1. These data indicate that there is a

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

significant difference between the understanding of logotherapy and the understanding of the other three major therapies addressed. Students reported understanding logotherapy to a lesser degree. There was a significant difference between the likelihood of using logotherapy and the likelihood of using the other therapies addressed. Students are less likely to use logotherapy.

Table 2 presents student responses to the basic tenets

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Insert Table 2 about here

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and assumptions of the counseling theories addressed. The questions in this section that were agreed to most often were:

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question nine, which is a logotherapy assumption; ten, which is a logotherapy tenet associated with will to meaning; and six, which is a logotherapy construct dealing with meaning in life. The questions most disagreed with were: question one, which is a basic assumption of cognitive behaviorialism; and two, which is a tenet of the psychodynamic approach.

### Discussion

The sample of students do not intend to use logotherapy, even though the curriculum addresses it. A text used by this program describes logotherapy as the wave of the future (Ivey, 1987). These future career counselors are not knowledgeable of this approach even though they are more in agreement with the tenets of logotherapy than they are with the tenets of two approaches they are knowledgeable of and would use. This may be idiosyncratic to this limited sample and other programs at other institutions may be addressing logotherapy more adequately. Further investigations are needed to determine why logotherapy is not being chosen as a career counseling approach, and what may be done to promote its merits.

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Appendix

*Questionnaire for Potential Career and/or Guidance Counselors*

**Part I - Biographic Information**

Major - \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Graduation - \_\_\_\_\_

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Do you plan to practice Career Counseling? \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Please indicate on the following two sections how much you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate letter(s).

KEY

SA - Strongly Agree

A - Agree

U - Undecided

D - Disagree

SD - Strongly Disagree

**Part II - Theory Preference and Knowledge**

- |             |                                                                              |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SA A U D SD | 1. I understand the basic concepts of Cognitive - Behavioralism.             |
| SA A U D SD | 2. I would use techniques of Cognitive - Behavioralism in Career Counseling. |
| SA A U D SD | 3. I understand the basic concepts of Logotherapy.                           |
| SA A U D SD | 4. I would use techniques of Logotherapy in Career Counseling.               |
| SA A U D SD | 5. I understand the basic concepts of Client-Centered Therapy.               |

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- |             |                                                                            |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SA A U D SD | 6. I would use techniques of Client-Centered Therapy in Career Counseling. |
| SA A U D SD | 7. I understand the basic concepts of Psychodynamics.                      |
| SA A U D SD | 8. I would use techniques of Psychodynamics in Career Counseling.          |

**Part III - Please respond to the following statements according to how relevant they are to your philosophy of Career Counseling.**

|     |                        |
|-----|------------------------|
|     | SA - Strongly Agree    |
|     | A - Agree              |
| KEY | U - Undecided          |
|     | D - Disagree           |
|     | SD - Strongly Disagree |

- |             |                                                                                              |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SA A U D SD | 1. Life is essentially a process of reaction to stimuli.                                     |
| SA A U D SD | 2. Acting out impulses is the primary concern of people.                                     |
| SA A U D SD | 3. People are primarily concerned with developing a meaningful life.                         |
| SA A U D SD | 4. If one wants to establish a good life, he has only to settle his socioeconomic situation. |
| SA A U D SD | 5. People today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.                          |
| SA A U D SD | 6. It is important to address the <i>why</i> of choices or indecisiveness.                   |
| SA A U D SD | 7. People can overcome biological, psychological and sociological conditions.                |
| SA A U D SD | 8. There is often a gap between what one is and what one thinks s/he should be.              |
| SA A U D SD | 9. Each individual's life is unique and irreplaceable.                                       |

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- SA A U D SD      10. Life is a chain of questions to which each person must respond by making decisions.
- SA A U D SD      11. It is important to actualize values.
- SA A U D SD      12. People have free will.

### ***Part IV - Please finish the following statement.***

The purpose of Career Counseling is

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Table 1

## Responses to Questions Concerning Counseling Theories (n=15)

| Questions                    | SD  | D   | U   | A   | SD  | MEAN             | SD  |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----|
|                              | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |                  |     |
| 1. Understand Behaviorialism | 0%  | 7   | 13  | 67  | 13  | 3.9              | .74 |
| 2. Would Use Behaviorialism  | 0%  | 7   | 27  | 67  | 0   | 3.6              | .63 |
| 3. Understand Logotherapy    | 20% | 47  | 33  | 0   | 0   | 2.1 <sup>a</sup> | .74 |
| 4. Would Use Logotherapy     | 7%  | 13  | 73  | 7   | 0   | 2.8 <sup>b</sup> | .68 |
| 5. Understand Client-Center  | 0%  | 0   | 0   | 47  | 53  | 4.5              | .52 |
| 6. Would use Client-Center   | 0%  | 13  | 7   | 53  | 27  | 3.9              | .96 |
| 7. Understand Psychodynam.   | 0%  | 0   | 7   | 80  | 13  | 4.1              | .46 |
| 8. Would use Psychodynamic   | 0%  | 13  | 40  | 40  | 7   | 3.4              | .81 |

Note. Percentages were rounded up to whole numbers.

<sup>a</sup> The mean response to question 3 was significantly different ( $p<.001$ ) from that to questions 1, 5 and 7.

<sup>b</sup> The mean response to question 4 was significantly different ( $p<.001$ ) from that to questions 2, 6 and 8.

Table 2

Responses to Questions Concerning Theory Assumptions (n=15)

| Questions                       | SD  | D   | U   | A   | SD  |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                                 | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
| 1. Life's a reaction to stimuli | 0%  | 7   | 0   | 94  | 0   |
| 2. Act on impulses primarily    | 0%  | 40  | 27  | 33  | 0   |
| 3. Develop meaningful life      | 0%  | 0   | 33  | 60  | 7   |
| 4. Settle socioeconomics        | 0%  | 13  | 7   | 60  | 20  |
| 5. Means to live- no meaning    | 0%  | 7   | 7   | 66  | 20  |
| 6. Why of choices important     | 0%  | 0   | 7   | 73  | 20  |
| 7. Can overcome conditions      | 0%  | 7   | 20  | 53  | 20  |
| 8. What is vs. what should be   | 0%  | 0   | 13  | 60  | 27  |
| 9. People are unique            | 0%  | 0   | 0   | 27  | 73  |
| 10. Life's question-response    | 0%  | 0   | 7   | 60  | 33  |
| 11. Should actualize values     | 0%  | 0   | 20  | 53  | 27  |
| 12. People have free will       | 0%  | 13  | 13  | 40  | 33  |

Note. Percentages were rounded up to whole numbers.